

Operation Lifeline Sudan resumes

NAIROBI (R) — The United Nations is preparing to resume large-scale food relief operations in southern Sudan after getting the go-ahead from Khartoum and the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), U.N. officials said Monday. The green light came Friday when rebels lifted objections to a resumption of relief flights to the war-torn region. It did so after receiving guarantees that food delivered to the rebel side would be based on the result of a new U.N. survey. The SPLA had earlier protested at U.N. plans to allocate only 16,000 tonnes of the 104,000 tonnes of food to be distributed this year in rebel-held areas. The military government in Khartoum banned relief flights to the south Nov. 3 to launch a bombing campaign against rebel-held towns in the region, but two weeks ago it said the relief flights could resume. U.N. spokesman Carlton James said the first U.N. plane to fly in to rebel-held areas of southern Sudan would probably leave Khartoum in northwestern Kenya for Bor, a town on the River Nile, Tuesday.

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Bait Al Maqdes assails U.S. Senate

AMMAN (Petra) — The Islamic conference of Jerusalem (Bait Al Maqdes) Monday condemned a U.S. Senate resolution acknowledging Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In a cable addressed to President George Bush, the organization said the decision constituted "a grave danger and a flagrant aggression on the Arab Nation." The resolution "conflicts with the official American stand which calls for just and durable peace in the Middle East and conflicts with all U.N. resolutions on the Palestine issue which were supported by Washington," it said. The cable said that Jerusalem "represents Arab and Islamic cultural and historical heritage and the decision was an insult to the Arab and Muslim nations and is bound to cause further violence." The cable demanded that the U.S. Congress rescind such "dangerous decisions." The conference also issued a statement noting that the protection of Jerusalem "an Arab and Islamic responsibility" and called on Arab and Muslim countries to take a very firm stand with regard to the issue at the international level.

PLO welcomes Thatcher remarks

TUNIS (Agencies) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) welcomed reports Monday that British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said the settlement of Soviet Jews in the Israeli-occupied territories was illegal. Thatcher was quoted as saying in an interview with two Kuwaiti newspapers that settling Soviet Jews in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Arab Jerusalem was illegal and would complicate peace (see page 2). Bessam Abu Sharif, political adviser to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, said in a written statement: "We positively appreciate what the British prime minister said." Abu Sharif called on the international community to put pressure on Israel to speed up withdrawal from the territories.

Ceausescu's brother denies charges

BUCHAREST (R) — The younger brother of executed Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu appeared before a military court Monday and denied that he murdered seven people during last December's revolution. "I do not admit that I have shot anyone dead," Lieutenant-General Niculae Andruță Ceausescu told a three-man military court. The trial of Ceausescu — who closely resembles his brother — was the first of a member of the former ruling class since the Stalinist president and his wife Elena were tried and executed last December 25. He denied all the main charges against him — "aggravated murder," attempted murder and "instigating unfulfilled genocide" by ordering secretaries to shoot police cadets under his command to fire on protesters.

Chad says Libyan forces attacking its positions

CAIRO (R) — Chad's ambassador to Egypt accused Libya Monday of attacking Chadian positions from Sudanese territory in violation of a truce. Abdul Kader Adom told Egypt's national news agency that an envoy would arrive in Cairo next week to deliver a message from Chadian leader Hissene Habre to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, current chairman of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). He said the message would deal with the Chadian-Libyan conflict, but he did not identify the envoy. "The ceasefire is being consistently violated with (Libyan) attacks launched from Sudan's Darfur region," Adom said.

Arab, African refugees halt hunger strike

WARSAW (R) — Fifteen Arab and African refugees, stranded in Poland when Sweden refused them entry, have called off a hunger strike after meeting U.N. representatives, a local official said Monday. The protesters were among hundreds of refugees in the Baltic port of Szwedzka deported from Sweden last week. The official said the 15 ended a five-day fast in a Szwedzka church on Sunday after representatives from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees told them none would be sent back to countries where their lives would be in danger. Some 45 refugees went on hunger strike last Tuesday, but the other 30 had already called off their protest. The refugees include Lebanese, Syrians, Iraqis, Libyans, Kurds, Somalis, Eritreans and Sri Lankans.

Pakistan to seek \$3.57 billion in foreign aid

ISLAMABAD (R) — Pakistan will seek \$3.57 billion in foreign aid in the 1990/91 fiscal year beginning in July when it hopes to sustain economic growth of more than five per cent, government sources said Monday. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government will ask for \$3.29 billion from a World Bank consortium meeting in Paris on April 17-18 and \$282 million from other sources, they said. The amount from the consortium, if agreed, will be slightly less than the \$3.41 billion committed last year.

Saddam Hussein says Iraqi chemical weapons are capable of destroying half of Israel

Iraq threatens massive retaliation if Israel attacks

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — President Saddam Hussein threatened Monday to incinerate half of Israel with advanced chemical weapons if it joined what he called a big power conspiracy against Iraq.

"I swear to God we will let our fire eat half of Israel if it tries to wage anything against Iraq," he said in his first major reaction to charges that Iraq had tried to obtain triggers for nuclear weapons.

The charges led to calls in the U.S. and Israel for the destruction of Iraq's alleged nuclear capability.

"Do they think the \$10,500 worth of triggers were enough to produce atomic bombs?... what nonsense?... we don't need an atomic bomb, because we have binary chemicals," Hussein told a military ceremony in Baghdad Monday.

Binary weapons have two components, each relatively harmless until they combine after launch to produce a deadly nerve agent.

Israel seeks to calm tempers after Iraqi warning

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel said Monday it would not be intimidated by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's threat to use chemical weapons against the Jewish state but sought to calm tempers.

"Israel has no aggressive intentions against anyone but has sufficiently proven in the past that it is able to defend itself and will not be blackmailed by threats like that," said Avi Pazner, senior advisor to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

He told Reuters Israel did not take the Iraqi threat lightly and would act cautiously.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, in a televised speech, said Baghdad had highly advanced chemical weapons and threatened to destroy half of Israel if it struck against his country.

Japan to help effort for Mideast dialogue

CAIRO (R) — Japan plans to invite senior Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials to Tokyo in an effort to open a direct dialogue between the PLO and Israel, a Foreign Ministry official said Monday.

Questioned on a Tokyo press tour, the official said: "We are planning to do so... but their itinerary has not yet been fixed."

In another sign that energy-starved Japan is adopting a higher diplomatic profile in the Middle East, the Foreign Ministry said United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahyan would visit Tokyo in mid-May.

An official said a formal announcement would come later.

Monday's newspaper report on the PLO visit said the Japanese side was expected to appeal to Palestinian officials to hold talks with Israel while stressing its support for the peace initiative of PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

Last autumn Japan reached separate agreement to hold regular political dialogues with Israel and the PLO when both Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens visited Tokyo.

The Foreign Ministry official said the agenda for the UAE president's talks with Japanese leader May included guarantees of stable crude oil supply to Japan — the UAE is Japan's largest source of oil — as well as the expansion of technical cooperation and Japanese public investment.

Israelis want electoral reform

TEL AVIV (R) — Israelis, disgusted with the current backroom maneuvering to form a new government, are increasingly demanding electoral reform.

An opinion poll published Monday in the Maariv newspaper showed 73 per cent favoured immediate reform of Israel's strict proportional representation system that leaves a small minority of ultra-orthodox rabbis holding the balance of power.

President Chaim Herzog met three reserve army officers on hunger strike outside parliament to demand a change in the form of government and supported their cause, his office said.

The mayors of most major cities placed a joint advertisement in the Haaretz newspaper Monday calling for a mass rally next Saturday to demand the direct election of the prime minister and a constituency electoral system.

The hunger strikers said they had collected thousands of signatures on a petition and vowed to continue their fast until all

Israelis took to the streets. "We're sick and tired of these politicians and this form of government. We can't miss this chance to change the system. We will do everything to get each Israeli... on the street," said Avi Kadish, 37, on the sixth day of the hunger strike.

The usually neutral president said in his monthly radio address last week there was an urgent need for electoral reform that would give voters a direct say in who ran the country.

Until a direct connection is established between the voter and those he elects, the voter will not be master in his own house as befits a democratic country," Herzog said.

Letters of support have flooded his office since he spoke.

After inconclusive elections in 1988, Herzog proposed that the two major parties, Labour and Likud, form a temporary pact to enact electoral reform and then hold new polls.

But political commentators say the big parties are too behoven

to the religious factions and do not trust each other.

Under the current system, Israelis vote for national party lists. Fifteen parties are represented in the fragmented Knesset (parliament).

Forming a government requires byzantine negotiations with the four religious which hold 18 of the 120 seats.

The popular appeal for change was sparked by political wrangling following the collapse of a 15-month "national unity" government that both Labour and Likud.

Labour leader Shimon Peres was granted first try to form a government but support in parliament is split 60-60 between his more dovish party and caretaker Premier Yitzhak Shamir's Likud.

Both sides have courted old rabbis who could break the tie.

Last week the rabbis scored an unprecedented victory when parliament approved a state budget allocating three times more money to religious institutions than in 1989.

De Klerk unveils tough anti-strife plan

CAPE TOWN (Agencies) — President F.W. de Klerk said Monday he would send troops and police into South Africa's black townships to clamp down on political violence.

"Everyone must understand that these decisions can lead to a rise in the number of people held in detention," de Klerk told parliament.

Balancing these tough and potentially controversial moves, de Klerk announced conciliatory steps to ease power sharing talks with black nationalists, including a legal procedure to give amnesty to former anti-apartheid guerrillas.

He confirmed he would meet de Klerk Thursday to discuss ways to end the violence. Mandela, who has acknowledged differences with other ANC leaders, decided

to meet de Klerk despite the ANC decision to pull out of preliminary peace talks scheduled for next week.

Police in Natal said the clashes between ANC supporters and Inkatha, a Zulu organisation, killed at least 53 people and wounded hundreds since last Tuesday. Local reports said the death toll could reach 100.

Even before de Klerk's announcement, troop reinforcements in steel helmets and carrying automatic weapons were drafted into townships of Natal province.

De Klerk said the government had from Monday begun boosting security in Natal, sending in extra troops and police, and setting up special courts.

Mandela made a renewed call Monday for peace during a visit to Edendale, a Natal township wracked by recent fighting among rival black factions.

Mandela, deputy president of the ANC, urged his supporters and those of the rival Inkatha organisation to quit fighting and unite in the struggle against the white-led government.

"We are not fighting Inkatha,"

Mandela told 2,000 people crammed into a church hall. "We are fighting apartheid and the forces of oppression."

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to meet de Klerk despite the ANC decision to pull out of preliminary peace talks scheduled for next week.

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ACC states pursue oil, gas cooperation

AMMAN (J.T.) — Ministers of oil and mineral resources from the four-member Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) countries will meet in Amman April 23 to discuss the implementation of an agreement they signed in Amman in February on cooperation in oil and gas production and exploration.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Thabet Al Taher said in a statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that energy experts and technicians from the ministries of oil and mineral resources in the four ACC countries would review the terms of the agreement and work out a practical programme to be submitted with recommendations to the four ministers April 23.

Taher said that the agreement provides for cooperation and

coordination among the four countries in oil and natural gas production and also in alternative energy resources, research work in oil and natural gas and joint ventures in these fields.

Cooperation is already under way among Egypt and Iraq in oil exploration and the Iraqi Ministry of Oil is helping Jordan's oil exploration operations, the minister pointed out. He said Iraq had been sending technical teams to work with the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) in prospecting for oil in Jordan and had been training Jordanian technicians.

Taher said the Egyptian oil ministry would assign a technical team to Jordan by the end of April to help the NRA in its quest to find oil in the Kingdom.

Lithuania prepares reply to Moscow

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Lithuania sent a delegation to Moscow Monday in hopes of beginning talks with President Mikhail Gorbachev on the show-down over its declaration of independence.

Vytautas Landsbergis, president of the breakaway republic, said he hoped for a peaceful settlement despite a Kremlin demand that Lithuania annul the declaration, Radio Moscow reported.

Lithuanian leaders were preparing a reply to increasingly strident calls from Moscow to rescind its declaration of independence.

Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis told parliament a reply had been drafted to two stern weekend appeals from Gorbachev, Radio Vilnius reporter Virginia Jakutiene told Reuters by telephone.

Aoun urges new plan for Lebanon

BEIRUT (Agencies) — General Michel Aoun, who rejected 1989 Arab-backed Lebanon peace plan, has urged Arab leaders to find a new pact that would satisfy all rival parties.

Official sources said Monday Aoun, commander of half of Lebanon's 35,000-man army, has written to the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Algeria and to the Arab League about the pact.

The three states sponsored last year's peace agreement by Lebanese deputies to end 15 years of war. The accord, reached in the Saudi city of Taif, entrenched powers between the long-dominant Christian Maronite community and the Muslim majority.

But it failed to include a clear timetable for a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon, cited by Aoun as his main reason for rejecting it.

"I reiterate my government's readiness to fully cooperate with your committee's endeavours to achieve an understanding among the Lebanese parties and other

sides concerned with solving the Lebanese crisis," said Aoun in the letter.

"I leave it to your good offices... to choose the right frame, which could be Taif-2 or any other frame to achieve dialogue, the results of which would be comprehensive, just and practical," he said.

Thick smoke developed into mushroom-like clouds over snow covered slopes separating the Geagea and Aoun forces east of Beirut as the two sides traded rockets, howitzer and tank cannon rounds.

"Visibility is almost nil in the Kesrouan mountains. No one can move," the spokesman added.

Maronite Catholic Patriarch Nasrallah Sfeir continued talks with neutral Christian leaders on

(Continued on page 3)

Rioting convicts defy British authorities

MANCHESTER, England (Agencies) — Rioting convicts retained control of a wing for sex offenders in one of Britain's oldest jails Monday, preventing police and warders checking reports that inmates had been battered to death there.

Officials said rioters, a hard core of whom continued to defy police and warders, had turned the inside of Strangeways jail in the northern English city of Manchester into a smouldering "tomb site."

But they were unable to confirm reports that up to 12 prisoners had been killed in violence that erupted in the overcrowded jail Sunday morning.

The guerrillas escaped, but Jordanian authorities believe the Islamic Jihad group carried out the attack, Reuters reported.

Spokesman Charles Keseru. The Home Office, which is in charge of the prison system, said 119 inmates remained on the loose, mainly in five cell blocks of the austere, red-brick prison.

The prisoners started fires and at one point it was feared the jail would

Settlement of Soviet Jews in occupied Arab lands is illegal, Thatcher says

KUWAIT (AP) — British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, in an interview published Monday, said settling Soviet Jews in the Israeli-occupied Arab territories, including East Jerusalem, was illegal and will thwart Middle East peace efforts.

She backed U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's plan envisaging an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in Cairo.

She said it would be "a very ironic and unjust reward for all our efforts if the freedom of Soviet Jews to emigrate were to be at the expense of the rights, the homes and the land of the people of the occupied territories."

"I hope that a new Israeli government can be formed quickly, with the courage to say 'yes' to dialogue with a genuinely representative Palestinian delegation," Thatcher told Arabic-language Al Quds daily.

The English text of the interview was published by the English-language Kuwait Times daily.

The coalition government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir announced earlier this month over his refusal to accept U.S. peace proposals.

Middle East peace efforts have been further complicated by the expected flood of Soviet Jews to Israel following Moscow's easing of travel restrictions.

The Arabs fear that as many as 75,000 Soviet Jews will emigrate to Israel, with many settling in the occupied West Bank and

Gaza Strip, which roughly encompass an independent Palestinian state proclaimed in November 1988.

Thatcher noted: "We support Mr. Baker's efforts. It is most unfortunate that the prospects for an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in Cairo, for which he and others have worked so hard, have been set back by the collapse of the Israeli coalition."

On the Soviet Jews, she said: "There are two important issues here. One is the freedom of the Soviet Jews to immigrate to Israel and elsewhere."

"We worked very hard to secure them that right and support it fully," she said.

"The second is the settling of Soviet Jewish immigrants in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. That is illegal, and is likely to make the search for peace in the region even harder."

Thatcher said any Middle East settlement should provide for Palestinian self-determination as well as security for Israel.

She backed convening an international conference under United Nations auspices, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, as "a good

overall framework for direct negotiations between the parties."

"The cornerstone of any settlement should be Security Council Resolution 242 and exchange for land for peace," she added.

The British-drafted resolution after the 1967 Middle East war has provided the basis for all Middle East peacemaking attempts.

Responding to a question about what could be done to prevent the renewal of hostilities between Iran and Iraq, Thatcher expressed all-out support for efforts by U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar.

But she said both sides should show flexibility.

"This is a serious problem. There has to be a permanent settlement of the Iran-Iraq conflict on the basis of the Security Council Resolution 598," she said.

"The international community can lend its full support and encouragement to all that is being done by the U.N. Secretary General to convene direct talks between the two sides."

A U.N.-sponsored ceasefire halting the 8-year Gulf war took effect on Aug. 20, 1988. But peace talks have stalled.

Thatcher noted: "If the secretary-general's efforts are to succeed, then Iran and Iraq must approach those talks with flexibility and willingness to make progress."

Ethiopians, Eritrean rebels meet in Sanaa

No love of charity after 15 years of Lebanese civil war

By Yousef Azmeh
Reuter

SANA, North Yemen (AP) — Four Eritrean rebel groups and Ethiopian officials met Monday for North Yemeni-sponsored peace talks that officials hope will develop into an overall peace conference involving other factions to end Africa's longest war.

The meeting opened Sunday night at the Yemeni Foreign Ministry after the sunset meal with which Muslims break the day's fast in the holy month of Ramadan.

Both sides stressed their desire to end the guerrilla war with a lasting political settlement before going into closed session.

Shewani Yalta, a member of the politburo of Ethiopia's ruling Labour Party, led a 14-member delegation from Addis Ababa.

Leaders from the four rebel factions — the Eritrean Liberation Front, the ELF-Revolutionary Council, the ELF-National Council, and the ELF-Unified Organisation — attended.

The Muslim-dominated groups claim to represent 50 per cent of the disparate rebel forces who have been fighting for autonomy for Ethiopia's northern Red Sea province since 1962.

But the main guerrilla faction, the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front (EPLF), did not attend the meeting.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter arranged talks between that group and Ethiopian authorities in his hometown of Atlanta, Georgia, last year and then in Nairobi, Kenya, early this year.

The EPLF launched a new offensive in February and recently captured the port of Massawa.

Yemeni officials said Sanaa hoped to have the talks develop into an all-round peace conference where the EPLF, Sudan and all parties concerned with the conflict would be represented.

No one mentioned any basis for an agreement, although there is a United Nations resolution providing for Eritrean self-rule.

An Eritrean source, speaking on condition he was not named, said: "The main thing is to decide whether to continue negotiations or not, and then possible solutions will be laid out."

The source complained about the "insufficiency" of the Sanaa meeting and stressed that "we should have all the forces together."

He said that the ELF groups and the Yemens tried to get the EPLF to attend the talks, but got no response.

The source said the Ethiopians complained about the lack of unity among the Eritrean factions, but noted that Adis Abeba has still been talking separately to the various groups.

The rebels who did attend the Sanaa meeting chose Saif Ortman Shater, a member of the ELF's Executive Committee, as their leader.

The Yemenis were represented by Ahmad Mohammad Al Iriani, a former undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry who has led the Sanaa mediation effort since it was launched a year ago.

He appealed to both sides to demonstrate understanding and pursue "the dialogue to find a peaceful, just and lasting solution" to the 29-year-old war.

The Sanaa meeting is the second between the four smaller Eritrean groups and the Ethiopians. The first, mediated by Sudan, was held in Khartoum in March and April 1989.

Shater complained that the follow-up to the Khartoum meeting had been repeatedly postponed by the Ethiopians.

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ACC nationals exempt from travel tax

AMMAN (J.T.) — Nationals from Jordan's partner countries in the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) which groups Iraq, Egypt and North Yemen in addition to Jordan will be exempted from paying departure taxes and other fees upon leaving the Kingdom, according to an announcement by the Council of Ministers Monday.

The announcement said that this measure would be adopted only if reciprocated by the other ACC members.

Also Monday a Royal Decree was issued endorsing the 11 agreements concluded by the ACC states last February in Amman, dealing with cooperation in scientific, municipal affairs, health, meteorology, air and land transport and religious affairs.

One of the agreements, on health affairs, urged the four states to launch cooperation in medical services and in the production of pharmaceuticals to attain medicine, vaccines and medical appliances self-sufficiency.

The agreement encouraged the four states to exchange expertise, experiments and publications as well as visits by experts and scientists.

The four countries pledged to launch cooperation in combating contagious diseases, to exchange information and to organise conferences and seminars to deal with matters related to combating diseases.

The agreement called on health ministers from the ACC member states to hold annual meetings.

Civil service panel plans symposium on improving bureaucracy

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Civil Service Commission (CSC) will organise a three-day national symposium to pave the ground for the implementation of a public administration development programme to promote the work of government institutions.

The announcement was made at a meeting held at the CSC by the commission's council chaired by Minister of Information Ibrahim Izzeddin.

The council heard a review by the CSC Director Mohammad Abu Nowar about the CSC executive committee's activities and the preliminary steps taken in the course of implementing the four-year development programme.

Abu Nowar said that the 1990-1993 programme will be carried out in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) which had pledged to provide \$750,000 to finance the training courses within this programme.

The CSC's council group ministers of planning, finance, education and higher education as well as the CSC director, the managing director of the Jordan Phosphates Mines Company, the legal advisor at the Prime Ministry and the director of the Institute of Public Administration.

Palestinian rights violated — Abu Qoura

AMMAN (Petra) — The settlement of Jewish immigrants on Arab land in Palestine violates Article 49 of the fourth Geneva convention and is considered a flagrant violation of the international humanitarian law, president of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) Dr. Ahmad Abu Qoura said Monday.

"Israel's acts of sacrifice at the holy places and the historical and cultural sites in the occupied Arab territories represent another violation of international law," Abu Qoura said in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He said that violations of and encroachments on these holy sites are committed on a daily basis, but are not denounced by the world community.

Abu Qoura said that the international organisations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had failed to help the Palestinians because of continued United States support for the Israeli enemy.

Minister pledges to boost youth activities

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Youth is considering the revival of Al Hussein summer camps where youths can do useful work for the country during the summer holidays, according to Minister of Youth Ibrahim Ghabsheh.

"The youths participating in these camps can, among other things, take part in planting trees to help attain Jordan's goal of greening the country by the year 2000 and can take up other constructive work under the supervision of superiors and teachers," the minister said.

"Voluntary work and other practical work which can be taken

up at the camps will no doubt enrich the young men's capabilities and bolster their potentials," Ghabsheh said.

Ghabsheh said that his ministry was closely cooperating with other government departments which are concerned with the youth. "The work of the National Olympic Committee which groups several representatives of the ministries of education, higher education, universities, the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Youth is one example of such cooperation," the minister said.

The Council of Ministers is also considering a proposal calling for the formation of a higher council, grouping all youth sectors, with extensive powers designed to promote youth centres, the minister pointed out.

"The Ministry of Youth is also directly connected with the work

of youth centres in the Kingdom and the ministry is deeply concerned with their development at all levels," Ghabsheh added.

"In order to promote the youth centres operations and activities, the Ministry of Youth has now submitted a proposal for the establishment of a special fund to finance youth and sports activities in the Kingdom," the minister said.

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Baker's not much different from Bush

THERE IS still a big challenge to Israel in the statement made by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker on Jerusalem Friday. In his letter to Congressman Mel Levine, a California Democrat and a staunch supporter of Israel, Baker had this to say on settlements of Jews in Jerusalem: "I am also very aware of the great significance which Jerusalem has for the Jewish people as well as for people of all religions. Clearly Jews and others can live where they want, east or west, and the city must remain undivided."

If other peoples, presumably Arabs included in them, can settle anywhere in Jerusalem, then the formula just enunciated by the American secretary of state is a prescription for internationalising the Holy City. This has always been a solid international proposal on the future status of Jerusalem and it has won some support and recognition. If internationalisation of Jerusalem is what the U.S. is now officially advocating, then it will be wiser if this stance is spelled out in the clearest possible manner. The Israelis cannot have their cake and eat it too. If Tel Aviv wants and seeks to keep Jerusalem, holy to the three monotheistic religions, united, then it must be prepared to accept to keep it so for all peoples as well, especially its indigenous people, the Palestinian Arabs. As Baker has poignantly pointed out to Levine, if Jewish immigrants must have access to Jerusalem, east or west, then others, meaning the Palestinian Arabs, must likewise have access to all of Jerusalem. Israel has been silent on Baker's pronouncement apparently because he has in effect called their bluff. It follows therefore that as long as Israel rejects the proposition that Jerusalem, east and west, is open to the Palestinians as well, then by default Israel must forfeit any claim to settle its people in Arab Jerusalem. And since this is the logical conclusion that must be drawn from the international position on Jerusalem, Israel should not have any right to stake a claim of its own on Jerusalem except in the context of a negotiated settlement of the basic Arab-Israeli conflict. Until then, Israel cannot and must not be allowed to settle any Jews, be they immigrants or otherwise, in Arab Jerusalem. In this sense there may be no contradiction between the pronouncement of President George Bush categorically rejecting Israel's claim to have the right to settle Jewish immigrants in Arab Jerusalem and that of his secretary of state. For, as long as others, principally the Palestinian Arabs, are denied access to all of Jerusalem, then Israel has no right whatsoever to settle its own people in Arab Jerusalem. This impasse brings to the fore the urgency of holding an international conference on the Middle East with a view to settling once and for all the entire Arab-Israeli conflicts, including the Palestinian problem, in conformity with international resolutions and norms. As long as Israel shuns such a negotiating forum, it must be prevented from taking unilateral positions on Jerusalem or the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

JORDAN PRESS EDITORIALS

Al Ra'i Arabic daily on Monday described a decision by the U.S. Senate to consider Jerusalem as the united capital of Israel as presenting an open support for Israel's usurpation of the occupied city, legitimising Israel's aggression on the Arab land of Palestine. The paper said that it is pointless for the Arabs to raise an outcry at the diplomatic level without backing their cries with practical steps, reflecting their unity and their genuine determination to regain their rights. The paper said that it is clear for all the Arabs now that an organised campaign is being launched on their nation from different sources and all is aimed at destroying the nation's will to fight or resist aggression. The recent developments point to one direction: that the Arabs are targeted by their enemies who wish to maintain their aggression on the Arab region and exploit its wealth, the paper noted. It said that the hostile campaign is manifested in the onslaught on Iraq, the ongoing Jewish emigration, the escalation of repressive actions on the Palestinians and the obstacles being laid in the path of any solution for the Gulf conflict. It said that unless the Arabs unite and take serious concerted action and plans joint strategies at an Arab summit meeting, the Arab Nation will remain an easy prey for its enemies.

Al Dostour daily discussed Monday a meeting by the Israeli government during which a general review of Iraq's military capability was made. This review brings to mind a similar situation preceding Israel's raid on the nuclear plant near Baghdad nine years ago, and points to one direction: that Israel is now contemplating a military action against the Arab country, the paper noted. It said that by doing this and by discussing the situation at a government level, Israel is thus joining the Western media in the ongoing hostile campaign on Iraq, following the execution in Baghdad last month of a British spy. Israel and its Western allies did not expect that Iraq will come out victorious from the Gulf conflict and were surprised at the victories achieved by the Iraqi armed forces and the country's military capabilities which can be used to repel any future aggression, the paper continued. It said that should Israel launch an adventure, the Middle East will be in for a new period of turbulence and conflict which can only harm world peace and security. The Western media, the paper said, have been preparing the ground for Israel to launch its attack on the Arab countries, and it seems that the time has come for Israel to implement the final act.

Sawt Al Shabab dwelt on the same topic Monday and said that the first thread of the international conspiracy on Iraq came from London's Heathrow airport. It was the same airport where a previous campaign was launched against Syria in a bid to subdue the Arab country and enforce the Western will and impose Zionist desires on the Arabs, the paper said.

Economic Forum

Investment climate in post-devaluation era

By Dr. Abdalla Malki

THE first question put to me in a TV programme on Arab capital abroad scheduled to be shown today on the Arabic channel was how good I thought the investment climate in Jordan was. The answer was very simple and ought to be very persuasive. My hypothesis was that our investment climate had been distorted and made incapable of attracting Arab and foreign investments. If it has failed to convince Jordanian capital to stay in Jordan or come back to it, this climate will not be able to attract Arab and foreign capital in the first place.

Devaluation drag. Our investment climate was seriously distorted as a consequence of the economic crisis which had erupted in 1988 and derailed the Jordanian economy. To put the economy back on the right track, we need years of laborious work and consistent policies. Even then, the

frightened Arab and foreign investors will wait a bit longer to make double sure that the recovery is genuine and setbacks are decisively ruled out.

The point is that the crisis led to the devaluation of the Jordanian dinar. Superficially my claim may seem that devaluation spurs foreign investment. In a developing country, this is an outright misunderstanding of the facts of real life. Devaluation makes local currency less expensive. It does mean getting more local currency units, dinars in our case for incoming foreign currencies but it also means giving up that many dinars when the time comes to retrieve these currencies. In developing countries, devaluation usually breeds further devaluations and the foreign investor ends up giving more local currency units to get back his initial money. This was exactly what happened in Jordan. We

started from a situation where it had been alleged that the dinar was overvalued by about 20 per cent but the floated dinar depreciated by some forty to fifty per cent. Thus foreign banks in Jordan, for example, are suffering because in spite of flatter profits in the dinar, they have found that their return to capital has declined. Now they find it difficult to persuade their head offices to adopt any expansion plans in Jordan. This exemplifies the investment dilemma that has developed in the post-devaluation era.

Hedge against depreciation. Now potential Arab and foreign investors would want an assurance that the dinar would not depreciate further and further before they commit themselves and their money to investment in Jordan. No policy-maker, to my mind, will be ready to make a statement to

that effect although every one of them is absolutely ready to work tirelessly to achieve that goal.

In a certain sense, a foreign investor undertaking economic investment (factory, farm, real estate), that is a venture which entails capital formation and thereby trades currency for physical assets, will not worry because these assets are excellent hedge against currency devaluation. But the point is that our foreign investors are basically Arabs and non-resident Jordanians whose investments take mainly the form of the so-called indirect investments. These entail no acquisition of physical assets but refer to financial assets denominated in dinars such as shares and deposits which are not shielded against currency devaluation. The savings which finance such investments originate in the fully-open markets of Arab oil

countries and have therefore full access to international markets with superior and more diversified opportunities. Why should they, therefore, opt to come to Jordan? This is a question that needs no answer.

Exchange controls: added risk. The devaluation of the dinar has heightened investment risks in Jordan. Because devaluation was accompanied with drainage of foreign currency reserves, the risk of controls on the transfer of foreign exchange or the unavailability of these currencies in the first place has been an added risk which has contributed to the contamination of the investment climate in Jordan.

Industrial strife. Devaluation depresses the investment climate in another sense. First it leads to over-devaluation, and unlabeled triggers inflation and substantial rises in the

cost of living. Later come industrial tension and demands for wage increases which are obtained only through industrial action. This situation scares foreign investors who resent the idea of working under the constant threat of industrial strife and mounting wages.

Changing tax legislation. Of course, the situation has been complicated by the constantly changing tax legislations. It is true that a foreign investor would not mind to make handsome profits and give up part of them in way of taxes, but the changeability of tax rates wrecks his calculations and might as well spill mistrust into the totality of economic policies. Unfortunately, that was our story throughout the eighties when we kept on changing our tax laws and, believe it or not, this happened twice in a single year: 1989.

Stunted educations and broken dreams

By Susan Linneé
The Associated Press

NDJAMENA, Chad — When wild-haired Chadian warriors from the northern desert descended on this sleepy capital a decade ago, they ran bayonets through books and strung rolls of film from the Normandie Cinema through the trees on Avenue Charles de Gaulle.

Their enemies from the south or the east or the west fired mortars into the country's only mainframe computer and ransacked schools and government offices.

The complex civil strife that consumed nearly 20 of Chad's 30 years of independence from 1968 to 1987 laid waste to more than just homes and buildings. It destroyed most vestiges of a fledgling government and administration throughout the central African nation and left citizens of the former French colony with little education and broken dreams.

AUGUSTINE Vanamby ran away to N'djamena at the age of 16 from a village outside the southern town of Sarh where she had been married off for the bride price of five cows at the time when marauding bands of renegade soldiers were terrorising peasants in the region.

Now 22, to support her daughter and several members of her own family, she serves meals and beer in her two-room mud-brick house in Bololo neighbourhood and works as a prostitute at Feeling and Equinox, two nightclubs catering to French soldiers.

About 1,000 soldiers, members of a French presence that has been maintained off and on since independence in 1960, are part of Operation Sparrowhawk, meant to be a buffer against Libyan attacks south of the 16th parallel.

In a scrapbook bearing the name of the French contingent in gold letters, Augustine has saved photos from a trip to France where she tried to become a computer programmer.

"My money ran out, and I had to make more to support my daughter and mother and brothers and sisters," she explained, lingering over a picture of herself in front of a chateau. "So here I am, back at the old business, hoping the French will stay but that there won't be another war."

AT the Faya-Largeau oasis half-way between N'djamena and the Libyan border, France has built a 2,900-metre airfield and airport capable of receiving passenger aircraft straight from Europe — and putting military aircraft within striking range of Libya.

According to French sources, France agreed to build the \$80-million-franc (\$14-million) airport if President Hissene Habre — a former guerrilla leader from

the north — agreed to the withdrawal of Operation Sparrowhawk.

Hassane Djambi Adoum, the top regional official, is counting on the airport to make Faya the gateway to the mountainous Tibesti region to the north, where prehistoric cave paintings have remained out of reach of all but the most intrepid travellers.

Hassane is the new prefect, the top administrative officer in the Bet prefecture which saw fierce fighting in 1986 and 1987.

An oasis of some 10,000 people and the administrative capital of the Bet — named after the districts of Borkou, Ennedi and Tibesti — Faya was pounded by mortars, bombs and artillery from Libyans, Libyan-backed Chadian rebels and regular units of the Chadian army as late as September 1987.

"We have several thousand students back in school now for the first time since the end of the war," he said during a dinner in N'djamena.

"But notebooks, pens and books are hard to come by. We have organised four soccer teams in the region, but the players have no uniforms, no shirts, so it's hard to tell who's on which side."

MOUSSA Elie, a 30-year-old high school teacher of French language and literature in Sarh, also wants books — grammar books, history books, dictionaries, even 19th century French novels like the Red and the Black.

"My students — and I — are dying to read, to improve our minds and keep up with what is going on in the world. Well take anything, there is so little here, and no money for what there is."

Sarh is the hub of Chad's so-called useful southern agricultural region, but the town and its surrounding area have been hard-pressed since the world price for cotton, the country's principal export, fell 58 per cent in 1985.

Moussa and his colleague, Guebralbaye Koumadoum, who teaches at the high school in Mongor in the centre of the country, are members of the tiny intellectual elite in the impoverished nation of 5.5 million with their \$350-a-month salaries that are already six months overdue.

A senior Chadian official who was once a guerrilla fighter said one of the country's biggest problems is the rural exodus to the capital.

"Every functionary has about 20 to 25 people directly dependent on him," he said. "It's not that corruption is such a problem here because there's basically no money to steal. The problem is that civil servants spend very little time doing the jobs they're meant to do because they have to be out hustling to make ends meet for all their relatives."

LETTERS

Bravo JTV!

To the Editor

MAY I publicly congratulate Jordan Television for playing the film "The World of Puppets" on Sunday March 25. Jordan is now very aware of the importance of puppets in education, entertainment and installing values in children.

I must mention too that bountiful compliments that go their way for their choice of classical music which they now offer in profusion. We have waited a long time for quality shows such as these and beg for less trigger-happy characters in commercial movies.

Nelly Lame
Amman

'Nuclear proliferation threatens world peace'

By Alan Eshier
Reuter

WASHINGTON — As tensions with the Soviet Union have eased, the United States increasingly sees nuclear proliferation among Third World countries as the number one threat to its security and world peace.

"The president is strongly on record as believing that. But now one can see the emergence of an even greater threat than in the past," said one senior State Department official.

Last week's disclosure of an attempt to export equipment used for nuclear detonators to Iraq highlighted the issue. But officials and analysts say Iraq is far from being the only Third World nation striving to acquire a nuclear capability.

India already has the bomb. Israel is strongly believed to have a formidable nuclear arsenal. Pakistan is well on the way, even if it has not actually assembled a nuclear device, and South Africa is also believed to be well advanced.

Most worrying of all for U.S. policy-makers is the unsupervised North Korean nuclear programme, which officials and analysts believe is more advanced than that of Iraq.

Rear-Admiral Thomas Brooks, head of naval intelligence, told Congress last month that a dozen or so nations could have nuclear weapons by the year 2000.

Apart from Iraq and North Korea, he mentioned nuclear research programme by Iran and Libya.

Richard Fieldhouse, a military analyst with the Natural Resources Defence Council, a private Washington think-tank, said the beginnings of a nuclear arms race between Iran and Iraq were already evident.

"The Iranians are looking for

sponsors to catch up the Iraqis and recently signed a science and technology transfer programme with China which includes nuclear-related technology," he said.

There may also be links between China and North Korea, while there have been persistent reports of North Korean-Iraqi nuclear cooperation, giving rise to the suspicion that China may be indirectly helping both Iran and Iraq.

According to Leonard Spector, an expert on nuclear proliferation with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the nuclear option is already a factor in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

He said the Israelis were increasingly worried about the

capacity of neighbouring states like Iraq and Syria to launch missiles carrying chemical or biological weapons at them.

At least 16 countries in the world already have chemical weapons. More are racing to develop or acquire ballistic missiles. A combination of the two would be deadly.

The Israeli army's official journal recently had two articles about how Israel might consider using nuclear weapons in such cases.

The only tool the superpowers have against such dangers is the non-proliferation pact. But some countries like Israel, India and Pakistan have refused to join and will not open their facilities to international inspection.

Others such as Iraq are widely believed to be flouting it. Jed Snyder, a Pentagon consultant, said he believed the Iraqis had successfully hidden the true extent of their programme from international inspectors.

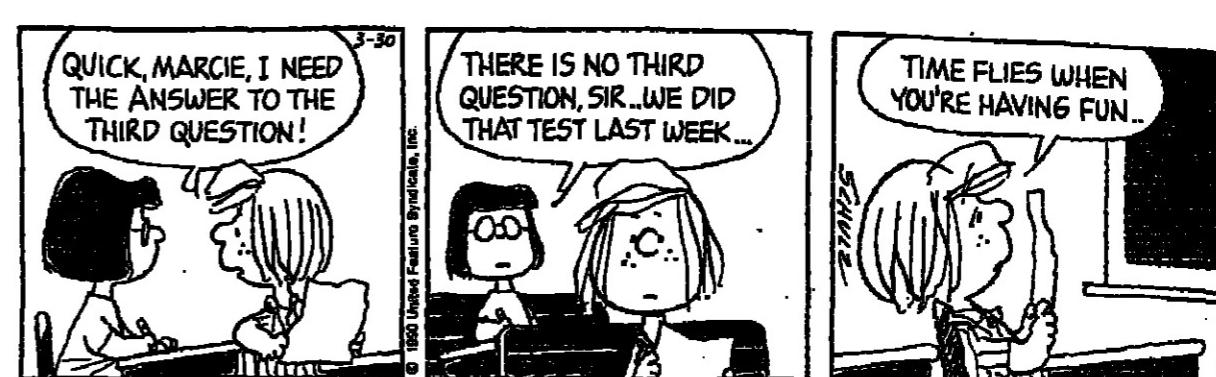
The U.S. State Department official conceded that with Third World countries scrambling for hard currency, it would be difficult to prevent dangerous technologies spreading.

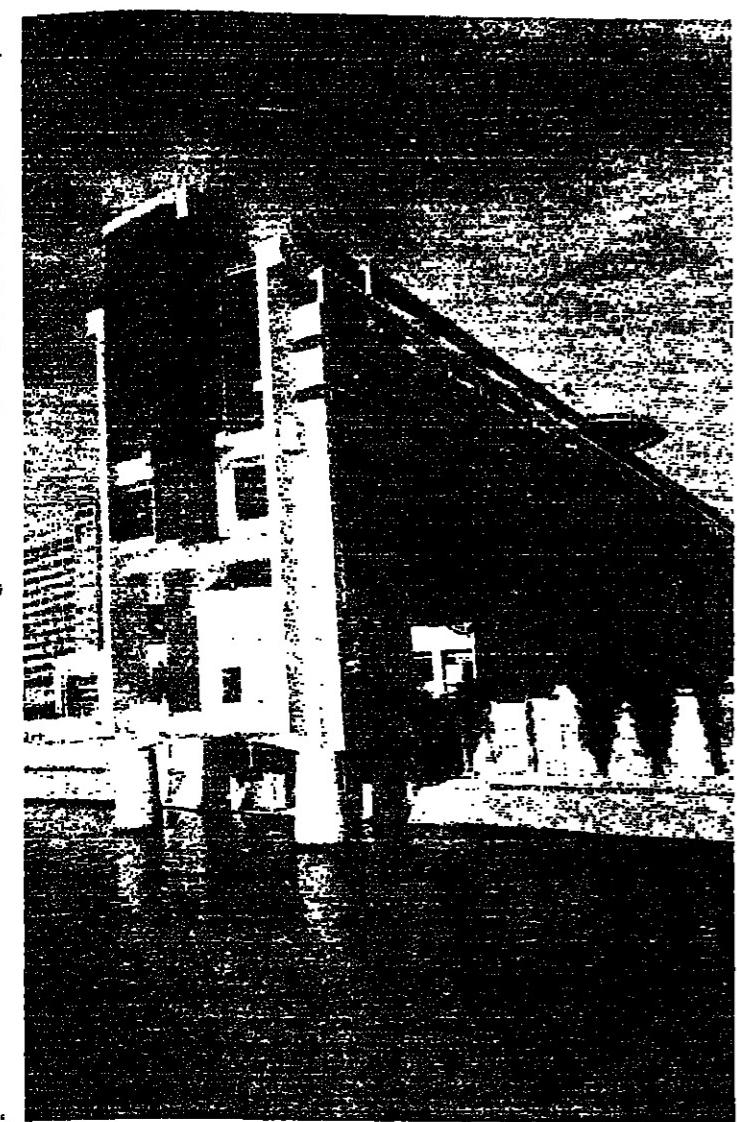
Washington has assurances from China that it will not sell medium-range missiles to Middle East countries. But the official said: "I would not disagree with the assessment that they would be eager to export items of that kind."

Andy Capp



Peanuts





'Bercy' — a real temple to office technology in Paris

By Claire Thierry

IN PARIS, in July 1989, amid the celebrations of the bicentenary of the French Revolution, another little revolution took place. The Ministry of Finance left its famous premises in Rue de Rivoli (it had occupied a wing of the Louvre for 118 years) and moved to a brand new building. It is now situated at 139, Rue de Bercy, in the east of Paris.

Farewell to the centre of the French capital and the prestigious palace which is now entirely devoted to the Louvre Museum! Farewell to the gilding and wood-paneling! Some high officials sigh. But most of them are brightly pleased. They are leaving tiny, dark inconvenient offices for an ultra-modern building, on the banks of the Seine.

The "Bercy," as it is familiarly called, is a real temple to office technology. It is huge and functional: 360 metres long and 31 metres high, with total area of 260,000 square metres cabled throughout. More than 5,000 civil servants work there in conditions of ideal comfort: roomy offices, fitted carpets, movable partitions and contemporary furniture.

They have numerous services at their disposal on the spot (cafeterias, four restaurants, a sports complex, a creche with a garden, a bank, a library, an international conference hall, etc.) and, above all, the utmost in matters of organisation.

Indeed, this city within a city is the biggest pre-cabled building in Europe. Nearly 300 kilometres of cables link up 3,500 computers and terminals. This efficient system of communication, called "Scribe," designed and built by Bull, with the corresponding software, enables workers at the

Ministry of Finance to receive information in real time, without having to move. The latest electronic switchboard can handle 10,000 phonecalls an hour, a record in France.

Two other star performers illustrate the massive arrival of technology in administration. The first, called "Teledoc," is a little train (even so, it has 400 little carriages) which acts as a postal delivery service along the 6 kilometres of its route. It carries the mail to the addressee as soon as it arrives at Bercy. It takes half an hour. Previously, it took from one to three days.

The other, called Synodi, is an automatically operated filing system. The user types the code of the file wanted, on his computer, and a robot goes to fetch the document in the building where it is preciously stored. It takes two hours to receive.

Nor should one forget the tools put at the disposal of the minister and his direct aids: the helicopter pad on the roof and the landing-stage on the river Seine. They can thus get to the "decision centres" (the presidential palace of the Elysees and the prime minister's residence, the Hotel Matignon, faster, by air or boat.

This superb liner of the year 2,000 was designed by the architect Paul Chemetov and Borja Huidobro and built by Dumez, D.T.P., S.A.E. and G.T.M. in four and a half years. It cost 3.5 billion francs, which is about 10,000 francs a m². This is not all that expensive, when one considers the site, the quality of the appointments and the savings in operations which it makes possible. A remark by an executive: "From the point of view of logistics, it is sensational!" (L'Actualité En France).

Iraqi leader warns Israel

(Continued from page 1)

to the bombing of a plant where up to 300 Iraqis worked. "Those Iraqis, in their (the West's) viewpoint, were not human beings. Only Bazoft, and not the 17 million defending their security, was a human being."

Hussein also mentioned international arms dealer George Bull, shot dead in Brussels 10 days ago by unknown assailants, who he said had visited Iraq.

" Didn't (he) have any human rights when they killed him with a silenced gun, simply because he came to Iraq... when Bazoft... had the world stand on its feet for him?"

Hussein did not say who he thought had killed Bull, a scientist whose projects included long-range artillery.

Bazoft was arrested while visiting the site of a fire near Baghdad which foreign newspapers said was a military plant.

In his speech Monday, Hussein also said:

"If aggression is waged on (another) Arab and he asks for our help, we will do all we can, with the help of God."

He said the United States was partly built by a "bunch of undisciplined gangs" before it became a superpower.

"America is a superpower in materialistic terms, but not a moral superpower that safeguards the rights of peoples and respects international laws," he said.

Snake hunting — not at all charming

By Edmond Roy Laffernis
Photos: Aditya Arya

DURGA NATH stared at me through his blackened eyelids, as he explained the legend of his calling. Many years ago, he said, before the winds became rain and the nights became day, the god Vishnu rubbed his hands in mud and made a man he called Gorak Nath. Vishnu then gifted this creation to another god, Shiva, who told him that henceforth he and his clan would be the worshippers and keepers of snakes. In the vast pantheon of Hindu gods, Shiva is commonly depicted with a garland, of serpents around his neck, and it is from him that the Nathas of today gain inspiration.

Gorak Nath, the legend continues, after being told by Shiva to worship snakes then gave a great dinner at which he served cobra flesh and venom to the guests. It is from this great dinner that the progeny of the guests went on to become great snake charmers, and to develop an immunity to the potent venom of the snakes they handle.

But that is legend, and no one is more sure of it than Durga Nath himself, who, while agreeing to take me along with his team for a snake hunt on the outskirts of Delhi, took with him his trusted medical kit. What that kit contained however was hardly the stuff to instill any sense of security in me as it was classic witch doctor stuff — herbs, bones, birds' feet, porcupine quills and 'holy' pebbles.

We travelled a few kilometres from the snake charmers' village of Molarband, on the edge of New Delhi to where Durga Nath assured me snakes were in plenty. The flat dry land was deceptively barren, sans life or so I thought, until Prabhu Nath, Durga's brother found our first cobra. Hardly had ten minutes passed when we had one hissing, writhing poisonous cobra in the bag, as Prabhu moved on to look into another hole in the earth. Putting his hand in rather fearlessly, I thought, Prabhu pulled out by its tail another cobra, and with a deft twist of his wrist pinned the head of the snake down on the ground before picking it up — head jammed between forefinger and thumb. The hold is vital, for some snakes are so supple that if held even a half inch behind the head they can twist around and bite. Hence it is best to hold the head itself.

For Durga and his team, this was only the beginning of the hunting season, by which time they would have caught nearly 200 snakes to charm the tourists in Old Delhi. Some hundred families of the Nathas — whose head is Durga Nath — live in the village of Molarband, an hour's drive from New Delhi. Durga Nath, who is also the village spokesman and wears

a black eyeliner and the saffron robes of a holy man, explains that the Nathas have been living here for more than two centuries and that his ancestors charmed snakes for visitors to the courts of the Mughal emperors. Much has obviously changed and today Molarband is slowly losing itself to the southward spread of New Delhi. But cobras, rat snakes and the krait are still aplenty. Over the next few months, the Nathas will gather some one thousand snakes from the surrounding fields, and each house will slither with serpents. Only a Nath woman, who has herself grown up with cobras on her bed and under her pillow, would marry a snake charmer. The family is therefore completely at home with snakes, as little girls, who can hardly walk, play by pulling deadly cobras by their tails.

The snakes that are caught by Durga Nath and his team are evenly divided among the charmers, and each snake charmer keeps one or two snakes all year for business. But most snakes are caught during the monsoons, when their holes are flooded and they slide on to small islands and climb trees for survival. Some are sold to hospitals and colleges for dissection or for venom milking, but most are worked for a few months and then set free.

"When we catch a snake," said Durga Nath, "we make an agreement with it, that if it will be our friend, we will set it free within a few months." But even if Durga Nath does not want his snakes to go back to the wild he has no choice, since most snakes fall ill in captivity, and have to be freed to survive.

The Nath travel across India, performing in market places, tourist spots, weddings and ceremonies. Their gourd or flute is merely for effect; since cobras are deaf and spread their hood at any threat. All performing snakes have their teeth removed and are often sick from a bad diet. But while there is a lot of effect and little magic in draping a toothless snake across your shoulders, there is great skill in catching the snake in the wild.

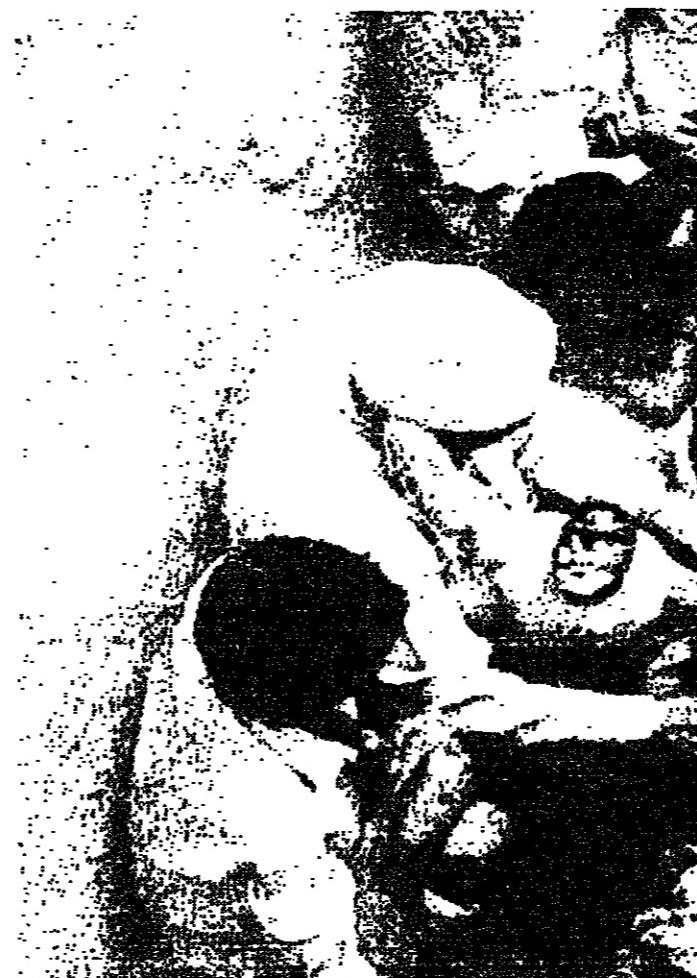
Durga Nath and his friends exercise infinite patience while out hunting, poking into bushes and examining patches of grass for any tell-tale signs of a snake. Eventually he sees a faint slither mark of a snake entering its hole, and spends the next 10 minutes digging the hissing reptile out. But while ordinary cobras are a dime a dozen in India, the real test of a snake charmer is to capture the King Cobra in the wild. The world's largest poisonous snake, the King Cobra packs enough venom to kill an elephant, and grows up to 15 feet in length. Often someone from Molarband will disappear for several months to Orissa, Assam or the Western Ghats,



The gourd or flute of 'snake charmers' is merely for effect, since cobras are deaf and spread their hood at any threat



Ordinary cobras are a dime a dozen in India; the real test of a 'snake charmer' is to capture the "king cobra" in the wild



All at home with the snakes

and perhaps come back with a King Cobra. According to Durga Nath, the capture of a King Cobra is a long and hard business.

"THEY are very strong," he said, "we usually go with five or six people and take a sheet to throw over the snake's head." While many of the Nathas have been bitten by snakes during their hunt, it is possible that they have developed a partial immunity to the venom. But the snake charmer's chief protection against the cobra is no more than what the mongoose uses against its enemy: speed and wisdom.

The young Nathas of Molarband have grown up around snakes, but there are very few who want to learn the skills that Durga Nath displayed so well.

"In fifty years," says Durga Nath, "the snake charmer you see on the streets of Delhi will have disappeared."

For the Nath clan, the new snake season will mean

months of hunting cobra, rat snakes and kraits wading through swamps and reaching barehanded into hissing bushes.

But now as the furious hissing from the bags made clear, the snake charmers of Delhi had just secured their first catch and it was time to give thanks to the gods.

As we drove back to the village, Durga Nath got out of the car and produced an evil looking bottle local brew. The three Nathas then sat down on a bare patch of ground, and Durga with his saffron, robes blowing in the wind, ceremoniously tipped the bottle earthwards to wet the parched earth below. That was all the father of the Nathas got, as the liquid soon disappeared down three dry snake charmer's throats. The charm of snake charming may be fading, but for this season at least, the blessings of Shiva were upon them. — Discover India.

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ABC cautiously optimistic about next decade

Arab economies enter 1990s split between indebted and rich

DUBAI (R) — Arab economies enter the 1990s split between indebted nations which must attract more foreign exchange, and rich oil producers which now need to allow their private sectors to mature away from state control.

The Arab World's biggest international bank, Arab Banking Corporation (ABC), looked forward into the next decade with cautious optimism in its latest survey of Arab economies. "Although the 1980s were undoubtedly traumatic times for many Arab economies, the many positive aspects of the decade should not be forgotten," said ABC President Abdullah Saudi, referring to the effects of the 1980s oil price crash.

"The overall economic and social infrastructure has been dramatically upgraded, and the region's industrial and agricultural base immeasurably strengthened," he said in a preface to

the 175-page report, received Monday.

In broad terms, the major oil producers in the Gulf, and Libya, have completed the large, state-funded infrastructure projects which have set the base for their economies, ABC said.

Prospects for their future growth and economic stability now rely on a successful devolution of state economic power into the private sector, allowing a broader-based economy, more resistant to oil price fluctuations, it said.

The United Arab Emirates' main problem is to ensure more even development among the seven emirates of its federation, which are dominated economically by oil producer Abu Dhabi and major trade centre Dubai, it said.

Iraq is a special case because of the damage to its economy from the war with Iran, but relatively minor damage to its oil facilities puts it in a strong position economically if it can work out a proper peace with Tehran, the report

export sector and in greater overseas industrial expansion.

The big drop in state oil revenues in the 1980s has led to a quicker than expected structural change, with more emphasis on the private sector, it said.

Elsewhere in the Gulf, Kuwait's oil exports and vast per capita external investments ensure its medium-term future but it has a long way to go in improving the efficiency of its internal economy, ABC said.

The challenge for indebted North African states, and other highly indebted countries such as Jordan, and Egypt, was to keep fiscal policies under tight control to maintain creditworthiness in the international financial community, it said.

Referring to individual countries, ABC said that the key to Saudi Arabia's future development lies in boosting the non-oil

sector and in greater overseas industrial expansion.

The creation last year of the Arab Maghreb Union of Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia and Mauritania offered them the advantages of more integration within two economic blocs — their own and the European Community.

However, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia especially must control population growth, and create more balanced industries and better employment opportunities, it said.

Egypt's recent economic reforms have put it in a better position for the medium-term, but the country's large population will still impose severe strains on living standards, it said.

Syria is a special case because of the damage to its economy from the war with Iran, but relatively minor damage to its oil facilities puts it in a strong position economically if it can work out a proper peace with Tehran, the report

is encouraging, ABC said.

Algeria plans to double LPG production

NICOSIA (R) — Algeria will ask foreign firms to help double its production of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by taking part in a four million tonnes per year expansion, the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) said Monday.

The Nicosia-based newsletter quoted Algerian Mines Minister Sadek Boussena as saying the state-owned firm Sonatrach would launch a campaign during the second half of 1990 to attract both producer and consumer firms to take part in joint ventures which would produce and separate the LPG.

The plan calls for construction of an 800-1,000 kilometre pipeline from the Alarif field in the southeastern part of the country to Hassi Messaoud and Hassi Mel in the northeast, he said.

Two pipelines with a capacity of 10 million tonnes per year already transport LPG from the northeast area to Arzew on the Mediterranean coast.

LPG would be produced from the Rhoude Noue field on the route of the proposed pipeline and from nearby oilfield where gas and LPG are presently reinjected, Boussena said.

He told MEES technical studies were already completed and preliminary contacts had been made with foreign firms. He did not name the companies.

MEES quoted Boussena as saying studies were also underway on a project to produce 1.5-2 million tonnes per year of condensates from the Haoud Al Hamra area near Hassi Messaoud. The unexploited gas field there contains LPG and condensates.

Talks with the Kuwait Foreign Oil Exploration Company KSC (KUFPEC) for an exploration and production concession near Nezarine in northern Algeria were at an advanced stage, Boussena said. Sonatrach discovered light, sulphur-free oil at a depth of more than 9,000 feet there in January 1989.

Italy's AGIP would also undertake further drilling in the Zemoul Elkebar region 600 kilometres southeast of Algiers where it discovered oil in December 1986 and January 1990, Boussena said.

Boussena told MEES talks were continuing with Italy on doubling a planned four to six billion cubic metre expansion of the Trans-Mediterranean (Transmed) pipeline which carries Algerian gas to Sicily via Tunisia.

The 1,100 kilometre pipeline, comprising three undersea lines, has a capacity of 14 billion cubic metres in its Algerian section, 13 billion cubic metres in Tunisia and 12.5 billion in the Sicilian.

MEES said further investment would be needed in both the Tunisian and Italian sectors to boost capacity of the Transmed through adding a wider fourth subsea pipeline or a fifth pipeline. Algeria would have to spend \$200 million on a booster pump system.

Uncertain oil demand may hamper expansion — OAPEC

KUWAIT (R) — Uncertain oil demand and the threat of import duties in consumer countries could hamper plans to expand the world's crude production capacity, the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) said.

The Kuwait-based organisation said exporting countries would not have difficulty securing finance to expand production to meet growing world demand, even when foreign help was needed.

"The real obstacle to expanding production capacity is uncertainty about how oil demand in the consuming countries will fare," the Kuwait-based group said in its monthly bulletin.

"The repeated talk about raising taxes on oil products and imposing duties on oil imports in the consuming countries only serves to exacerbate the exporting countries' dilemma," it said.

OAPEC said a frank, constructive dialogue between producers and consumers and between industry and avert a new global price shock threatened this decade by

rebounding world demand.

OAPEC Secretary-General Subroto has said the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries must spend \$60 billion before 1995 to boost output capacity by the required six to seven million barrels per day (BPD), up from 17 million BPD now.

OAPEC, which groups 10 Arab producers, said the extensive environmental campaign being waged against oil products in industrial countries has posed another major problem.

"The campaign portrays oil as the most polluting energy source although coal is more harmful and nuclear power is more dangerous..." the bulletin said.

"Any decision taken in the name of environmental protection must be based on scientifically proven facts about the scale of pollution caused by various sources and the costs of reducing it," it said.

OAPEC said a frank, constructive dialogue between producers and consumers and between industry and avert a new global price shock threatened this decade by

protecting intellectual property rights at the Uruguay round talks, which were named after the country where they were launched in 1986 and which are due to conclude in Brussels next December with a series of agreements covering 15 sectors of international commerce.

Protection of intellectual property rights has developed into a major issue at the Uruguay round talks, which were named after the country where they were launched in 1986 and which are due to conclude in Brussels next December with a series of agreements covering 15 sectors of international commerce.

The EC proposed that its text, which also covered protection of industrial designs, trade secrets, computer programmes, chipboard circuit layouts and geographical appellations of origin for wines, should form a annex of the GATT which sets the rules for 90 per cent of world merchandise trade.

A separate United Nations agency, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), oversees patent and copyright matters.

Under the EC proposal all GATT member states would comply with existing provisions of two intellectual property conventions administered by WIPO, and with additional commitments set out in the EC text.

These new commitments included enforcement procedures that would allow customs authorities to seize, forfeit and destroy goods that infringed protection rules, and imposition of fines or prison sentences on "trade pirates."

Disputes would be submitted to existing GATT procedures for resolving differences between trading partners, and countries would undertake not to resort to unilateral reprisals against a suspected offending state.

Delegates sources said this provision would prevent such action as the punitive tariffs the United States imposed in 1988 on imports from Brazil in retaliation for what Washington said was misappropriation of U.S. pharmaceutical patents.

UAE ministry urges stock exchange creation

ABU DHABI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ministry of Economy and Finance has told the government that the creation of an official stock exchange was essential to the national economy, ministry sources said.

The sources said the ministry had sent a report for discussion to the federal cabinet, the first time it had taken such a positive step in backing the much-discussed market.

"Setting up a stockmarket has become essential to the national economy. It is also an instrument to encourage citizens to invest their funds in their own country," the report said, quoted by the government.

The UAE has been talking about opening an official exchange to replace the current telephone-traded market since 1983.

Officials have said that the main problem in establishing a UAE exchange is differences in trade laws in the seven emirates that make up the federation.

The report has not yet been discussed in the cabinet. If it is endorsed, then we will go ahead with the projected market.

MEES quoted Boussena as saying studies were also underway on a project to produce 1.5-2 million tonnes per year of condensates from the Haoud Al Hamra area near Hassi Messaoud. The unexploited gas field there contains LPG and condensates.

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AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Monday, April 2, 1990 Central Bank official rates						
Buy	Sell					
U.S. dollar	669.0	673.0	Japanese yen (for 100)			
Pound Sterling	1088.8	1095.3	419.2	421.7		
Deutschmark	394.4	396.4	Dutch guilder	350.1	352.2	
Swiss franc	446.1	448.0	Swedish crown	109.1	109.8	
French franc	177.3	188.0	Italian lira (for 100)	53.6	53.9	
			Belgian franc	(for 10)	190.9	192.0

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Monday.	
One Sterling	1.6260/70
One U.S. dollar	1.16/18
	1.7030/37
	1.9170/80
	1.5040/50
	35.19/24
	5.7225/75
	12.52/123
	159.90/160.00
	6.1465/1515
	6.5925/75
	6.4980/5030
	368.00/368.50
One ounce of gold	
	U.S. dollars
	Canadian dollar
	Dentschmarks
	Dutch guilders
	Swiss francs
	Belgian francs
	French francs
	Italian lire
	Japanese yen
	Swedish crowns
	Norwegian crowns
	Danish crowns
	U.S. dollars

Tokyo bull staggers again as stocks plunge, bank props up yen

TOKYO (R) — A fresh hail of bullets ripped into Tokyo's wounded golden bull Monday as share prices plummeted and the Bank of Japan had to step in again to prop up the ailing yen.

After weeks during which bad news has spread through Japan's stock and money markets like a plague, the latest virus appeared on the front page of a leading financial newspaper.

The crucial article, later denied, said the big Japanese insurance firms on this first trading day of a new financial year were planning to sell off dead wood stocks as part of a rearrangement of their portfolios.

"That really set the market off," said Jeff Uscher, deputy general manager of the Tokyo branch of stockbrokers Smith New Court. "We didn't need to hear that."

The 225-share Nikkei Index fell 1,978.38 points or 6.60 per cent in the day to close at 28,002.07.

It was the second biggest one-day point plunge in history and the biggest since the October 1987 world stock crash.

"The psychology of the market has been utterly and completely shattered," Uscher said. "Once bitten, twice shy. The market is nursing some fairly big bites. It will take a lot of time for people to come back."

Worries over a declining yen, rising interest rates and slower corporate profit growth have sliced 28 per cent off the index since it finished 1989 at a record 38,915.87.

Monday's newspaper report on a supposed institutional sell-off pushed the yen down below 160 against the dollar just after the Tokyo opening, marking its lowest level since December 1986.

"This shows the yen has no positive factors," said Shohei Sakai, Sawa Bank's deputy general manager.

The dollar closed at 159.95 yen and 1,698.00 West German marks after 158.50 and 1,694.50 at Friday's New York close.

It finished off its peaks on profit-taking spurred by dollar-selling by the Bank of Japan shortly after the opening.

Dealers said they were hesitant ahead of the Group of Seven

industrial nations (G-7) meeting

in Paris Saturday. But some said they doubted if the G-7

would single out the yen's value against the dollar alone for any decisive coordinated action.

As long as other European currencies remained relatively stable against the dollar, they said, the G-7 was unlikely to risk seriously undermining this balance.

The weakness of the yen and the Tokyo stock market also reflected the fact that the world spotlight had moved from Japan to Europe.

"Europe 1992 has changed much of the world, and Eastern Europe changed it even further," said David Pike, economist at UBS Phillips and Drew International.

"It's been eclipsed by the rising sun."

"We're seeing an adjustment to that. The danger is if the adjustment goes too far," Pike said.

Brown retains welterweight title

WASHINGTON (AP) — Simon Brown stopped Tyrone Trice with a potent combination 51 seconds into the 10th round Sunday to defend his International Boxing Federation (IBF) welterweight crown for a seventh consecutive time.

Brown (32-1) put Trice against the ropes and then repeatedly pounded the challenger with a series of blows that forced referee Steve Smoger to stop the fight.

Trice, the no. 1 IBF challenger, fell to 36-3 after absorbing only his second loss since June 1984. The end came two rounds after Brown got the only knockout of the fight with a vicious left hook.

The bout was a rematch of their 1988 battle, when Brown claimed the vacant IBF crown by stopping Trice in the 14th round. In that fight, Trice had knocked Brown down and was leading on points before Brown rebounded to win.

Sunday, Brown established

control in the second round after an opening three minutes in which Trice got in the best punches by twice connecting with left jabs coming off the ropes.

Brown picked up the pace in the second round, stinging Trice with a good combination midway through the round. Trice retaliated with an impressive combination of his own in the final 30 seconds of the round, but it did little damage.

Brown scored with a crisp left jab in the third round that pinned Trice against the ropes. The challenger spent much of the rest of the round backing up, content to counterpunch with his back to the ropes.

Late in the round, Brown pinned Trice in the corner and scored with a series of blows that clearly stung the challenger. But the bell rang with Trice covering up for protection.

Trice used a good combination to get things rolling in the fourth

round, but Brown twice pinned him in the corner and did damage in each instance with an effective combination. Again, Brown was pounding Trice in the corner as the bell sounded.

Despite his barrage, Brown was cut over his left eye near the conclusion of the round.

The fifth round was more of the same, as Brown did heavy damage midway through by working Trice into the corner and landing with at least a dozen blows to the face and body. He duplicated that later in the round, opening a cut on Trice's nose and mouth.

After an uneventful sixth round, Brown again established command in the seventh with an uppercut that stunned Trice and placed him on the defensive. Trice, apparently weary, spent much of the latter portion of the round with his gloves over his face and often backpedaling from the onrushing Brown.

In a preliminary bout, heavyweight Riddick Bowe improved his professional record to 15-0 by stopping Robert Colay at 49 seconds of the second round. Bowe, a 1988 Olympic silver medalist, floored Colay in the first round and again in the second round before the referee ended the fight.

Brown got his knockdown with a crushing left hook midway through the eighth round that took the feet right out from under Trice and further bloodied the challenger's face. Trice spent the rest of the round hanging onto Brown and was penalized a point for holding.

Trice recovered by the time the ninth round got underway, although he had very little left in his punches and did little damage to the champion.

One round later, Brown put an end to things. Trice objected to Smoger's decision, saying later, "I was extremely surprised."

Construction cranes tower over the unfinished roof of the Olympic stadium, where crews are working amid the din of electric saws and clanking machinery. Renovation of the Olympic stadium will cost more than twice the original estimate and demonstrates Italy's problems in hosting the World Cup. Italy had four years to prepare but squandered its time.

Now workers are scrambling all over Italy to finish more than a billion dollars' worth of stadium renovations, road improvements and railroad, park and parking lot construction on time.

Union officials blame the hurried pace of construction for the deaths of 15 workers in accidents at World Cup projects. Costs have skyrocketed as contractors hire more workers to overcome delays.

Luca Di Montezemolo, the head of the organizing committee who has consistently criticised the delays, said Naples might not be fully ready for the tournament.

"The external part of the stadium is in disastrous condition," he was quoted as saying in the

Italian press. "I don't know if we will be able to organise the World Cup in Naples in a worthy way in time."

But Alberto Conte, the official in charge of the work at the stadium, countered that there were no major problems and that the stadium would be ready for the start of the World Cup.

Conte's assurances are echoed by government and tournament officials all over Italy, who insist the work will be finished in time. Such delays are typical in Italy, they argue, but in the end Italy always does what it must.

At Olympic stadium, the site of the most extensive and expensive remodelling, steel workers labour frantically to stay ahead of other men crawling along the rafters high above the stadium to attach the roof made of sections of fiberglass cloth coated with teflon.

Except for the roof, all the major structural work is finished. But there are still hundreds of smaller jobs. The playing field, for example, is still a patch of dirt. The lights are on the ground waiting to be attached to the steel rim above. Workers just began installing the 85,000 seats in late March.

"There is still a lot to do," one construction foreman said as he surveyed the dull gray, unfinished shell of Olympic stadium. He spoke on the condition that he not be identified. "But most of it is detail work. Except for the roof the big jobs are done. I believe they will finish in time. Now, if

they need to, they can just hire more people to make sure."

Bob Feirabend, the foreman for the company attacking the roof, works his 85-man crew 11 hours a day, six days a week. He said the original crew was about half that size and only planned to work nine hours a day, five days a week.

"We didn't get to start work until the first of March because of the delays in putting up the steel for the roof. We were supposed to start in mid-December or the beginning of January," he said.

Still, he said his crew has put up 40 per cent of the roof since the first of March and should have no trouble completing the project before the May 30 deadline.

"If the weather stays good, we probably will finish in April," he said.

Arturo Pandolfi, the director of works for the state railway in central Italy, said three shifts are working around the clock, seven days a week to finish a new rail line from the airport to the centre of Rome, a new tram line to the stadium and new terminal buildings.

There also have been delays in Milan's 318-billion-lire (\$255-million) package of World Cup improvements. But Antonio Simone, the regional sports commissioner in Lombardy, contends that all the projects are near completion and will be ready by the middle of May.

Workers rush to finish projects for World Cup

ROME (AP) — Crews are working feverishly to finish projects for the 1990 World Cup, but they're running out of time.

Soccer's global championship begins June 8, but the organising committee says seven of the 12 stadiums aren't complete. The delivery date for the Olympic stadium has been pushed back to May 30, just nine days before the start of the World Cup.

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Philadelphia beats 'the Suns'

PHILADELPHIA (AP) —

Charles Barkley scored 31 points and Mike Gminski had 19 points and 13 rebounds Sunday as the Philadelphia 76ers won their seventh straight game, 141-122 over the Phoenix Suns.

Philadelphia placed eight men in double figures, improving its home record to 31-5 and maintaining its three-game lead over Boston in the Atlantic Division.

Trevino remains the Senior tour's top money-winner with \$227,700. Nicklaus' \$120,000 first-place check vaulted him to fifth on the earnings list.

10th victory in 12 games.

Jordan, who totalled 118 points in the two games prior to Sunday, had 14 points in each of the third and fourth quarters.

In Richfield, Ohio, Larry Nance had 24 points and 13 rebounds as Cleveland ended Indiana's five-game winning streak.

The Cavaliers, in a battle with Atlanta and the Pacers for the final two playoff spots in the Eastern Conference, have won nine of 12 games overall, and nine of 10 at home.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Darrell Walker had 14 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists for his second straight triple-double and third in four games, and Washington took control early against New Jersey.

In Chicago, Michael Jordan scored 28 of his 47 points in the second half, leading Chicago to a 10th victory in 12 games.

In its first game at Boston Garden, the first-year expansion team played the Celtics even for 2 quarters. Then Boston closed the third period with an 18-6 run that made the score 101-90.

In Chicago, Michael Jordan scored 28 of his 47 points in the second half, leading Chicago to a

loss in 14 games and 31st in 35 games.

In Inglewood, California, Magic Johnson had 33 points and 13 assists as Los Angeles defeated Utah for its eighth consecutive home victory.

The Lakers led 47-37 with 5:44 left in the second quarter before pulling away with a 13-5 run, and the Jazz got no closer than 11 the rest of the way.

In Los Angeles, Winston Garland scored his only points of the game on a 22-foot fallaway jumper with 7.7 seconds left, rallying Los Angeles from a 14-point fourth-quarter deficit against Seattle despite a 39-point effort by Dale Ellis.

points and 25 rebounds and led a second-quarter charge that carried Dallas past Milwaukee.

Tarpley had seven field goals — three on tip-ins — and eight rebounds in the second period as the Mavericks turned a 22-18 deficit into a 48-35 halftime lead, the fewest points they have allowed in a first half this season.

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Nicklaus wins first Senior golf

back.

Player was Nicklaus' nearest rival, trailing by three at the turn, but the South African could get no closer as the golden bear birdied three of the last five holes for the final victory margin. Player pocketed \$65,000 for second.

Lee Trevino, who has dominated the Senior circuit in 1990 with three wins in his four

starts, struggled to an even-par 72 Sunday which included a quadruple-bogey eight at the sixth. He finished in a tie for 24th at three-over 219.

Trevino remains the Senior tour's top money-winner with \$227,700. Nicklaus' \$120,000 first-place check vaulted him to fifth on the earnings list.

Chang triumphs in Chicago tennis

CHICAGO (R) — Michael Chang struggled but rallied to a 7-6 (7-4) 1-6, 6-4 defeat of fellow-American Jim Grabb to win the Chicago men's tennis tournament Sunday.

"It's the best way I know to celebrate April Fool's day," Chang said. "This was a confidence booster."

"My serves were fine, my volleys were good but his passing shots did it," Grabb said. "I didn't prepare properly for the last set and I played the first set stupid. Good players take advantage of the opportunities and he did."

"He didn't have any pattern in his serves but he hit the corners. He didn't care where I was," said Chang, winner of the 1989 French Open. "I was fortunate to get the last break in the match. If I was broken in the first set, I couldn't have won. His serve was too good."

This was the first tournament Chang has played since he suffered a stress fracture of the hip in December while practicing.

Grabb, who eliminated Ivan Lendl Saturday in the semifinals, dominated the first set with his service, winning 22 of his 26

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Sills beats Morgan to win PGA

WOODLANDS, Texas (R) — Tony Sills sank an 18-inch putt on the first playoff hole to defeat Gil Morgan, and win the \$1 million Woodlands Open golf tournament Sunday.

Sills' par putt was worth \$180,000 and marked the first time the 34-year-old professional had won a tour event since joining the circuit in 1982. Morgan, who missed a five and a half foot par putt, won \$108,000.

Sills fired a final round 65 for a three-round total 204. The tournament was shortened to 54

holes due to rain Thursday and Friday.

Eight players finished the event at one back 205. Among the group were Spain's Seve Ballesteros and Briton Ian Woosnam. Ballesteros had an opportunity to tie for the lead and go into a playoff, but his 20-foot birdie attempt on the 18th hole fell inches short.

Sills started the day six shots behind co-leaders David Peoples and Hal Sutton. Peoples shot even par 72 for 205 and tied for third, while Sutton shot 74 and

finished tied for 15th.

The victory for Sills was his best showing since a tie for second at the 1986 Phoenix Open. The victory Sunday also earned him a trip to this week's Masters in Augusta.

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East German Social Democrat leader resigns amid Stasi row

EAST BERLIN (R) — East German Social Democratic Party (SPD) leader Ibrahim Boehme resigned Monday amid a row over his alleged role as security police informer.

Party spokesman Karl-August Kamili told a news conference Boehme was giving up all his party posts.

Boehme, who denies link with the former Stasi security police, stepped aside a week ago to clear his name. After he had viewed his police files last Friday he said he would resume the party leadership Monday.

Kamili, a deputy SPD leader, read out a letter from Boehme saying his first look at the Stasi files at security police headquarters Friday had shown there were still further documents to be viewed.

"This is not possible in the

short time available. For that reason he is resigning his posts out of respect for East Germany's young democracy," Kamili said.

Nowhere in Boehme's letter did he acknowledge having worked for the Stasi. He said another reason for quitting was his health — he was suffering from a persistent inner ear infection.

Boehme, whose party came second in East Germany's first free elections two weeks ago, was not at the news conference.

He was the second top East German politician to fall victim to the Stasi, the all-pervasive force that ensured hardline Communist

control until a peaceful revolution last year.

Just before the elections, conservative politician Wolfgang Schnur resigned after acknowledging he had worked for the Stasi for years.

The party he headed, Democratic Awakening, was in the victorious three-party alliance for Germany headed by the Christian Democrats (CDU) and backed by Bonn.

At a separate news conference, CDU leader Lothar de Maiziere said he aimed to be prime minister of East Germany's first democratic government.

De Maiziere, a musician turned lawyer, has also faced accusations of having worked for the Stasi. He has said his links with the secret security police did not go beyond those necessary to defend his dissident clients.

The SPD opposes inclusion of the right-wing DSU.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Storms kill 166 in Bangladesh

DHAKA (AP) — Tropical summer storms battering Bangladesh for the past nine days have killed 166 people and injured at least 1,600 others in house collapses and accidents at sea, police and newspaper reports said Monday. A Bengali language daily Ifteqar said the latest deaths occurred Sunday when 13 people were killed and at least 200 injured in a storm that ripped through the coastal district in the south and the central province of Manikganj. At least five people were killed and 200 injured in a house collapse on the island of Ujirchar off the southeastern coast, the newspaper said. Another four people were killed in the coastal district of Noakhali and four others died in Manikganj. Ifteqar said. At least 100 fishermen drowned last Thursday in a sudden storm in the Bay of Bengal, police officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The fishermen were listed as missing, but the officials, contacted by telephone, said Monday there was no hope of finding survivors. Thursday's storm also killed 15 people in the Noakhali district, 120 kilometres southeast of Dhaka. Many of the bodies were found buried under the debris of collapsed mud-and-straw huts. At least 500 people were injured.

Tiananmen Square reopens to public

PEKING (AP) — Tiananmen Square reopened to the public Monday with armed police maintaining a conspicuous presence among sparse rainy-day crowds. The vast square was closed to ordinary citizens Sunday, when overseas dissidents had called on students and others to "stroll" through the square in a silent protest over the military suppression last June of the pro-democracy movement. The city instead brought in some 5,000 schoolchildren who banged cymbals and beat drums as part of ceremonies to arouse civic enthusiasm for the Asian Games, to be held in Peking in September. Chinese offices and factories told people to stay away from the square Sunday and warned they should not go to Tiananmen on other anniversaries of events highlighting the April-June democracy campaign. The 40-hectare (100-acre) square, China's symbolic political centre, was open as usual Monday, but with a heavy police presence.

Gunmen kill 4 people in Karachi

KARACHI (R) — Gunmen sprayed bullets from a car in a Karachi street early Monday, killing four people and wounding six, police said. The men fled after the shooting in the centre of Pakistan's biggest city which is frequently hit by ethnic riots. More than 1,000 people have died since 1986 in ethnic unrest in southern Sind province of which Karachi is the capital.

World to mark Earth Day '90

WASHINGTON (AP) — A worldwide celebration of the environment will envelop this battered and polluted planet this month, and by all accounts Earth Day '90 will dwarf its namesake of two decades ago. Even corporate America wants to get involved. Planning for the environmental extravaganza has been in the works for more than a year. President George Bush has proclaimed April 22 Earth Day, and governors and mayors across the country are issuing similar proclamations. It was 20 years ago that Earth Day '70 ushered in the modern environmental movement. Denis Hayes, a California lawyer who was instrumental in the first Earth Day activities and is chairman of Earth Day 1990, says he wants this year's event to grab the attention of a new generation of activists for the coming decade and the next century.

Top mafia hit man arrested

ROME (R) — One of the mafia's most wanted "hit men" was arrested in the Sicilian town of Palermo Sunday after nine years on the run, police said. A spokesman said police had wanted Giuseppe Luccese, 29, who was seized with his girlfriend, in connection with up to 50 murders, including those of several senior policemen and public figures. Top anti-mafia magistrate Giovanni Falcone, who helped to plan the arrest, described the police operation as one of the most important coups against the mafia in recent times. Luccese is suspected of being behind the killing of police Commissioner Giuseppe Montano in July 1985 and that of former Republican Senator Ignazio Mineo the year before. He is also believed to have been a member of a squad which killed Palermo Prefect Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa, his young wife and bodyguard in 1982.

Greens take lead in Slovenian campaign

BELGRADE (R) — Environmentalist candidates in Slovenia have taken a surprise lead in popularity polls ahead of Yugoslavia's first free multi-party elections since World War II, Belgrade newspapers said Monday. The daily newspaper Vecernje Novosti said a poll showed the Greens would get 31.3 per cent of the vote in elections due to start on April 8 with the Communists running second. It gave no percentage for the Communists or other opposition parties. A total of 17 political parties and groups, including the Communists who have changed their name to the Democratic Reform Party (DRP), are taking part in elections for the regional parliament and for the republic's president. Recent polls have shown that former Communist Party chief Milan Kucan is leading in the presidential race while opposition parties could win a majority in parliament. All Slovenian parties favour Western-style Social Democracy and sweeping autonomy for Yugoslavia's eight constituent republics and provinces while some opposition leaders have called for secession from Yugoslavia.

Relatives claim bodies of U.S. fire victims

SAN PEDRO SULA, Honduras (R) — Grief-stricken relatives have claimed the bodies of 48 Hondurans who had sought to escape the grinding poverty of home by migrating, only to perish in a New York arson fire. Honduran President Rafael Callejas, who attended a brief ceremony at the airport after the coffins came in, called on Honduras to unite and help each other accept the tragedy.

Soviet army chief alarmed at spread in draft dodging

MOSCOW (R) — An eight-fold rise in draft-dodging in Lithuania and elsewhere in the Soviet Union, inspired by growing nationalism, is causing alarm in the armed forces, the chief of the Soviet general staff said Monday.

General Mikhail Moiseyev revealed in an article in the Communist Party daily Pravda that the number of young men refusing to sign up had jumped to 6,647 last year from only 837 in 1985.

Far from helping turn in the draft-dodgers, authorities both in the Baltic republics and in other centres of separation often encouraged them by passing legislation which incited conscripts not to sign up, he charged.

Moiseyev's remarks, published to coincide with the start of the spring recruiting season, followed a bitter dispute between the Kremlin and the new pro-independence Lithuanian government over the fate of young deserters seized by troops last week.

"Special alarm is being caused in the army by the frequency of attempts to refuse military service," said Moiseyev. "The statistics are very alarming."

"This is the result of the influence of many negative factors including the strengthening of nationalist manifestations in a number of regions, and anti-army campaigns conducted by various informal organisations."

Moiseyev said that of 259 people refusing military service in Lithuania and the two other Baltic republics last year, only two had been sentenced.

In the three Transcaucasian republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, also the scene of growing nationalist and separatist

sentiment, just one out of 1,146 draft-dodgers was sentenced in the same period.

"More than that, local authorities in a number of republics have adopted anti-constitutional laws which effectively provoke young people to refuse to serve and to desert," Moiseyev said.

"It is worth asking legislators why they are so irresponsible about the fate of young people, pushing them towards crimes which are punishable by law."

A movement called Geneva-49 has been active in the three Baltic republics, Georgia and other outlying Soviet republics in recent months persuading young men not to sign up in the Soviet army, which they denounce as an "army of occupation".

The group justifies the call with reference to a provision in the 1949 Geneva Convention, which says releases people from the obligation of serving in occupying forces.

Lithuanian authorities, locked in a battle of wits with the Kremlin since formally declaring a return to the republic's pre-war independence on March 11, have gone further, defending the right of conscripts to desert.

The Lithuanian government last week accused the Kremlin of "kidnapping" after troops in the capital Vilnius and the second city, Kaunas, burst into psychiatric hospitals and seized deserters who had taken refuge in them.

A statement by the Soviet Interior Ministry, published in the army newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda Sunday, attacked Geneva-49, accusing it of misrepresenting the convention and speculating on people's ignorance.

Inquiry begins into huge gas blast in Sydney

SYDNEY (R) — A massive fire at a liquefied petroleum gas plant, which caused the largest evacuation in Sydney for 20 years and closed Australia's busiest airport, could easily have led to a catastrophe, firemen said Monday.

They said it was a miracle no one was killed or injured when the explosion of a 40,000 gallon tank set off a series of spectacular blazes which sent flames several hundred metres into the night sky Sunday.

Witnesses said they thought a plane had crashed at nearby Sydney Airport. One at least described the initial mushrooming funnel of flame as "Hiroshima come to Sydney."

Around 100 fire officers fought the inferno for eight hours. Thousands of people living within three kilometres of the blaze

were evacuated, including guests at a luxury airport hotel and travellers at the airport's international terminal.

"I thought it was an atomic blast," said John Tarlington.

"We looked out of the window and there was a huge orange ball in the sky. Because we're so close to the airport, my second thought was that a plane had crashed."

The exploding tank was catapulted 300 metres into a canal, smaller tanks also blew up and buildings in the plant, which was unattended at the time of the fire Sunday night, were burnt to the ground.

"The whole area is devastated," said Ross Brogan of the fire investigation unit. "Buildings are demolished and shattered like matchwood... it's just total devastation."

If some of the tanks had

blown towards us, where we were evacuating from, we could have lost lives," he said.

Fire officers said they did not know what caused the initial fire. Investigators were only allowed to enter the plant around mid-morning because of the danger of further explosions.

Officials of the company which owned the gas plant said they believed a faulty release valve failed to work, allowing pressure to build up in the 40,000 gallon tank and causing an explosion rather than a burn-off.

A police spokesman said it was the largest civilian evacuation in Sydney, Australia's largest city, in his 20 years in the force and probably the biggest in Australia since cyclone Tracy devastated Darwin in 1974.

A spokesman for the plant operator Boral said he could not

estimate the amount of gas lost or the damage bill as he did not know how full the exploded tanks were.

New South Wales Premier Nick Greiner announced an inquiry into the explosion which environmentalists, local residents and opposition politicians said strengthened the case for chemical and fuel plants being moved away from residential areas.

Boral General Manager Peter McDonald said the lack of casualties proved the company's safety measures were sufficient.

"In the cold light of morning the events of last night proved to be contained almost entirely within the perimeter," he told a radio interviewer.

"Quite a large amount of brilliance of the fire was in fact safety relief valves working precisely as they were designed to do."

Le Pen hails call for tougher immigration laws

NICE, France (AP) — Jean-Marie Le Pen has hailed calls by mainstream conservatives for tougher immigration laws as proof his extremist National Front Party has seized the leadership of the French right.

Chatting with reporters covering the eighth party congress, Le Pen said former President Valery Giscard d'Estaing had fallen into step behind him on the issue.

"He has the same values and no doubt the same preoccupations," Le Pen said as delegates roared through the huge, flag-draped amphitheatre at this French Riviera resort.

Giscard d'Estaing, leader of the Union for French Democracy (UDF) coalition, proposed a national referendum on immigration Saturday at a weekend meeting of conservative leaders. But in an interview with the French television network TF1, he denied he shared Le Pen's views.

The 1,600 delegates chose Le Pen Saturday to lead the party to

legislative elections in 1993 and presidential balloting two years later.

In a 90-minute speech to close the three-day conference Sunday, Le Pen took a swipe at Giscard d'Estaing as a latecomer to his views on immigration, the most explosive social issue in the country.

"If Giscard d'Estaing starts speaking like Le Pen, the people will prefer the original to the copy," he said. "He'd like to be elected under our ideas rather than fight on his own."

Delegates earlier adopted a wide-ranging platform and installed a 100-member Central Committee to make major party decisions.

Le Pen, who won worldwide notoriety in 1987 by terming the holocaust a "detail of history," favours deporting all immigrants who arrived in France since 1974.

About 4 million of the country's 55 million people are immigrants, the majority of them from

former French colonies in North Africa.

Meanwhile, leaders of the traditional right concluded their summit in suburban Paris, working out a common position on immigration ahead of talks this week with the Socialist government.

Premier Michel Rocard has called for a multi-party offensive on racism following a series of racially motivated killings and beatings over past months. The National Front was not invited to the meeting.

During their two-day meeting, mainstream rightist leaders adopted a tough immigration platform they say must accompany any anti-racism legislation.

Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, a former premier and leader of the Rally for the Republic Party, joined Giscard d'Estaing in calling for a nationwide referendum on immigration.

"Our attitude is founded on the will to defend French society, its

civilisation, its personality and its human balance," said Chirac, adding that immigration is "out of control."

A poll taken during a six-month government investigation into racism showed last week that 75 per cent of French citizens thought there were too many north Africans in France.

The conservatives propose the government enforce firm measures to deport illegal immigrants, tighten rules for political asylum and shorten student visas from one year to the length of the course.

Under the proposals, only foreign workers with 10-year visas could be joined by their families. French immigration laws would be harmonised with those of the 11 other European Community members.

The conservatives also favour "constructive dialogue" between public officials and French Muslims, guaranteed religious freedom and new subsidised housing to prevent immigrant ghettos.

Mandela to meet de Klerk Thursday

DURBAN, South Africa (R) — African National Congress (ANC) leader Nelson Mandela said Monday he will meet South African President F. W. de Klerk next Thursday.

Reporters overheard him making arrangements for the meeting with de Klerk from an airport telephone. The reporters heard him say each man would be accompanied by three advisers.

Mandela told reporters afterwards he would meet the president Thursday.

He said at the weekend he wanted government guarantees that it would "exercise effective control" over the police, whom the ANC accuses of being largely responsible for inciting violence in black areas.

Mandela was to have addressed a joint rally with Buthelezi Monday to plead for peace in Natal, where more than 2,500 people have been killed in three years. Fighting intensified dramatically last week.

But the ANC also cancelled that meeting, saying it could pro-

voke increased bloodshed.

Mandela's close colleague Walter Sisulu told reporters on Monday Mandela would not meet Buthelezi at all during his two-day visit to the region.

Mandela told a rally near the coastal town of Port Elizabeth Sunday that the ANC would be prepared to go ahead with the talks, which had been scheduled for April 11, if the government guaranteed to control the police force.

Up to 17 people died last Monday when police fired on crowds demonstrating in the black township of Sebokeng against high rents and inferior living conditions under apartheid.

"As soon as the government takes effective measures to stop police brutalities, we will examine the question and approach the government for another date," said Mandela.

COLUMN 10

Mayor Bono chases motorcyclists

PALM SPRINGS, California (AP) — He does not wear a badge, but Palm Springs Mayor Sonny Bono figures he has enough moral authority to chase down speeding motorcyclists. Straddling his black motorcycle last weekend, Bono spotted a motorcyclist rocket through an intersection on Palm Canyon Drive, the main thoroughfare in the desert resort 100 miles east of Los Angeles. "I chased him down," Bono said Tuesday. "He said something about not being able to read my shirt, and I told him, 'you' better learn to read real fast unless you want to spend the night in jail.'" That is when the young rider noticed "Mayor Sonny Bono" printed on Bono's T-shirt. The mayor, who became famous singing "I Got You